The Case Against Placidus

By Gary Noel

"…most people use Placidus for the same reason I used to—everyone else does." This statement by Bruce Scofield appeared in the Fall/Winter 1992-1993 issue of *The Ascendant*, a journal produced by the Astrological Society of Connecticut. Bruce's article was called "Why I Use Porphyry Houses" but could probably have been called or at least subtitled "The Case Against Placidus." Bruce goes on to say, "How many really understand the abstract time/space equations that go into producing these cusps? Not many, and even worse, the explanation for the system in Dalton's Table of Houses, for decades the main table of houses for every astrologer, is wrong also. So astrologers have been using a system they can't even understand and have let a faulty explanation go on getting reprinted."

Some astrologers object to the Placidus house system because it disappears at latitudes above the Arctic Circle. Placidus produces house cusps when calculating charts for Salechard, Russia, a city built along the Arctic Circle with a latitude of 66°N33'"; however, Placidus cusps disappear if you try to create a chart for Fort Yukon, Alaska, a town with a latitude only 53 seconds higher than Salechard. Placidus fails to recognize the fact that the highest latitude north of the equator is 90 degrees; therefore, the Placidus system is not based on reality.

"No problem," some astrologers say. "Just use the equal house system when computing charts for extreme latitudes." Unfortunately, the equal house system has been discredited by the statistical research of astrological investigator and statistician Michel Gauquelin. With the help of Astro Computing Services (which later became Astro Communications Services, Inc.), Michel experimented with two equal house systems, one beginning with Ascendant and the other

beginning with Midheaven (known as MC on 10th or Equal from MC) and "…found that the maxima clearly obtained in his system of plus zones become diluted in the case of both."[1] Michel's conclusion: "The results demonstrate quite clearly that both rising and culminating zones are important."[2] According to astronomer/astrologer Robert Powell, "Gauquelin's work clearly supports the quadrant system of house division (defined by two axes: Ascendant and Midheaven) rather than any equal house system defined solely in relation to one axis (Ascendant: ancient systems; or Midheaven, little used modern system."[3]

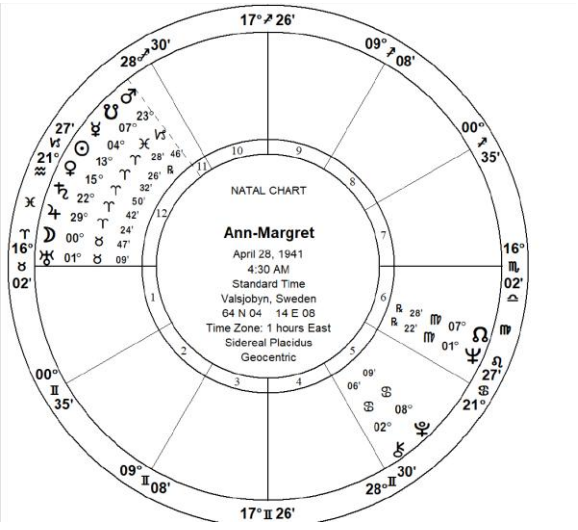
The Meridian house system not defined by Ascendant, the Whole House system not defined by Midheaven and the Morinus system not defined by either should all be considered discredited and not used by any astrologer who respects statistical science. Astrologer Cyril Fagan originally advocated using Regiomontanus house cusps and later promoted the Campanus house system. Both produce house cusps above the Arctic Circle if the Ascendant is direct; however, both collapse if the Ascendant is retrograde. Only in latitudes above the Arctic Circle can the Ascendant be retrograde and both the Alcabitius and Porphyry systems recognize this fact, the former, judging by various articles on the Internet, preferred by Swedish astrologers who often have clients born in the extreme northern latitudes. Both systems produce house cusps above the Arctic Circle whether the Ascendant is direct or retrograde.

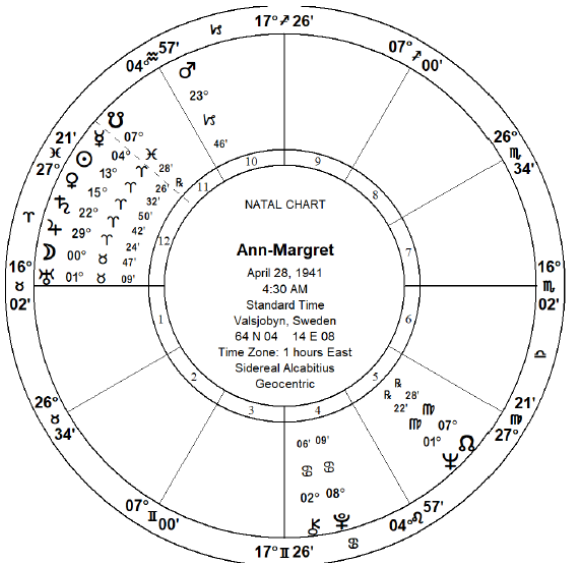
In 2017 the National Hockey League named Hall of Famer Borje Salming, born on April 17, 1951 near Kiruna, Sweden (67°N51') one of the 100 greatest players of the twentieth century. During his career, Salming played in 1,148 games, scored 150 goals and had 637 assists; however, if you did a Gauquelin type study of outstanding athletes, you would have to leave Salming out because the Placidus like cusps that Gauquelin used disappear when calculated for

someone born in or near Kiruna, a gesture that would hardly be fair to Salming. Koch cusps also vanish in the extreme latitudes.

The Placidus and Koch house systems have long been targets of ridicule by a group called the North Texas Skeptics (NTS). According to an NTS fact sheet, “It is hilarious that in neither of these two systems does anyone born above 66.5 degrees north latitude even have a horoscope! The stars have nothing to say about 12 million people!”[4] The skeptics would have no ammunition if astrologers used either Alcabitius or Porphyry houses and I, like the Swedes, prefer the former, a system once so popular it was called the “standard system.”[5] Guido Bonatti, the most celebrated astrologer of the 13th century, also favored Alcabitius houses.

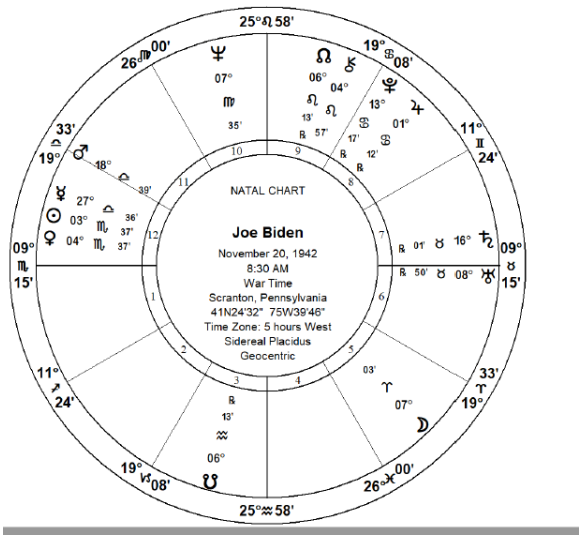
Actress Ann-Margret was born in Valsjöbyn, Sweden (64°N04') at 4:30 A.M. If you calculate her chart using Placidus cusps or Topocentric cusps which are similar to the latter, her natal Mars is in the counterclockwise 12th house; yet, Mars is closer to her Midheaven (36°approaching) than to her Ascendant (114°separating). If you calculate her chart using Alcabitius cusps, Mars is in the counterclockwise 10th house where it more logically should be.

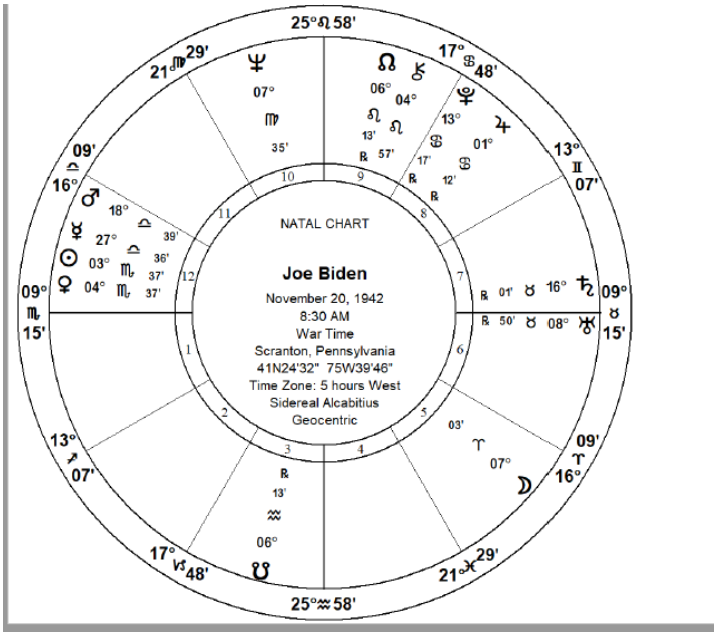




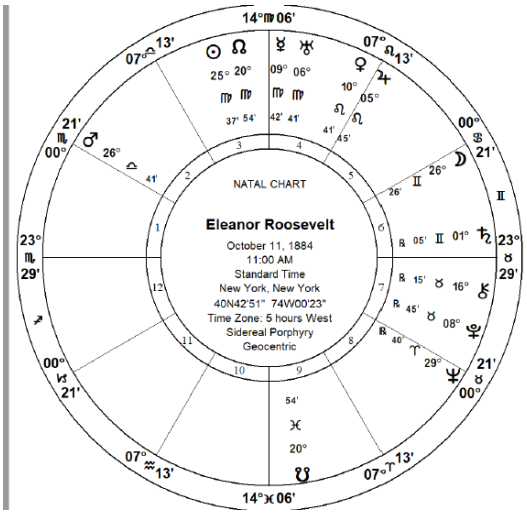
Since Gauquelin used Placidus like cusps in his statistical research verifying a link between planets, profession and personality, some astrologers believe that proves the validity of the Placidus system.[6] Gauquelin, however, did not consider Placidus all that sacred as he aspired to test other house systems but refrained from doing so because "…the expected frequencies are almost impossible to calculate."[7]

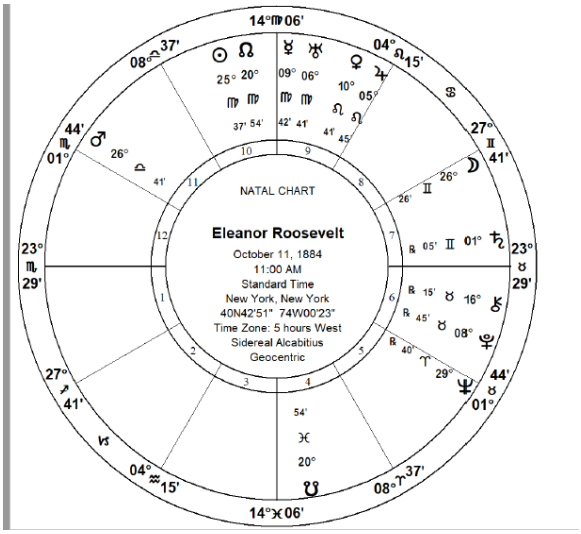
If the Placidus house system were a person, it would probably be arrested for identify theft. Gauquelin, calling the counterclockwise 12th and 9th houses "power zones" or "plus zones," concluded that planets in these areas have a profound influence on personality; however, I contend that the anticlockwise Alcabitius 12th and 9th houses are the real power/plus Zones.[8] Former President Biden doesn't have Mars in the 12th house if Placidus house cusps are employed, but if you apply Alcabitius cusps to determine the temperament of the former Delaware Senator, he clearly has Mars in the 12th counterclockwise house.





Identity theft is also a problem with Porphyry houses. Eleanor Roosevelt, America's First Lady from 1933 to 1945, has been described with the following words: strong, loved pranks, indefatigable, tough, gutsy, politically savvy, uncompromising. These are all traits Gauquelin associated with the Jupiterian personality. Alcabitius houses recognize her Jupiterian outlook by placing Jupiter in the 9th counterclockwise house. Porphyry houses deny her Jupiterian temperament by placing Jupiter in the 8th house, an area Gauquelin designated a "minus zone," a portion of space where planetary influence is diminished.





All things considered, it appears that of all the choices astrologers have, the Alcabitius house system is the most reliable. If you're uncomfortable denying a birth chart for 12 million individuals in the North Frigid Zone, if you have a problem with a house system that eliminates brilliant athletes such as Borje Salming from important statistical studies, if you are tired of being ridiculed by groups like the North Texas Skeptics and if you realize that Ann-Margret couldn't possibly have a 12th house Mars, then you have reached the same conclusion I have: Placidus is a deeply flawed house system.

Chart Data

Ann-Margret, April 28, 1941, 4:30 A.M. CET, Valsjöbyn, Sweden (64°N04', 14°E08'); A: Victoria Shaw quotes Ann-Margret's autobiography, *My Story*.
Joe Biden, November 20, 1942, 8:30 A.M. EWT, Scranton, PA (41°N24' 32", 75°W39' 46"); A: Marion March quotes Celeste Longacre from him in *Welcome to Planet Earth*, 4/1987.
Eleanor Roosevelt, October 11, 1884, 11 A.M. EST, New York, NY (40°N42'51", 74°W00'23"); AA: Birth record in hand from Joan Negus.

Endnotes

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[1] Robert Powell, *History of the Houses*, Astro Communications Services, Inc., p. 25.
[2] Michel Gauquelin, "Profession and Heredity Experiments: Computer Re-analysis and new Investigations of the same Material" in *Correlation* IV, I (1984), pp. 8-24, esp. p. 16.
[3] Powell, p. 25.
[4] http://www.ntskeptics.org/factsheets/astrolog.htm
[5] Robert Hand in "Signs as Houses (Places) in Ancient Astrology" in *Culture and Cosmos* Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter 2007, volume 11 no. 1 and 2, p. 138.
[6] Maria Kay Sims, *House Systems: Differences Between Them*, Astro Communications Services, San Diego: 1991, p. 1.
[7] Powell, p. 25.
[8] Astrologers originally and wisely, I think, counted the houses clockwise in accordance with the daily motion of the Sun which means the so-called cadent 12th and 9th houses are really the angular 1st and 4th houses. I believe it's time to honor this ancient tradition and start counting the houses clockwise as in the beginning.